

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6901

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 01545

TEHRAN FOR AMBASSADOR HELMS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, IR

SUBJ: GABON AND IRAN

SUMMARY. ONE MONTH PRIOR HIS SCHEDULED VISIT TO IRAN, BONGO RECEIVED VISIT FROM IRANIAN PRINCE GHULAM REZA PAHLAVI (FROM WHOM HE REQUESTED IRANIAN FINANCIAL AND MILITARY AID) BUT FAILED ACCEPT CREDENTIALS OF IRANIAN AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE. WHILE LATTER WILL RECOMMEND THAT GOI RESPOND FAVORABLY TO MILITARY AID REQUEST, AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE NONETHELESS HOPES GOI WILL DAMPEN WELCOME TO BONGO AS SIGN OF ITS DISPLEASURE OVER REFUSAL ACCEPT CREDENTIALS HERE. END SUMMARY.

1. SHAH'S YOUNGER BROTHER, PRINCE GHULAM REZA PAHLAVI, PAID FOUR-DAY SEMIOFFICIAL VISIT TO GABON THIS WEEK ROUGHLY ONE MONTH PRIOR BONGO'S SCHEDULED OCTOBER 20 ARRIVAL IN TEHRAN. PRINCE, WHO CAME AT INVITATION OF MINSTATE FOR TRANSPORT RAWIRI TO EXPLORE PRIVATE BUSINESS DEALS INVOLVING WOOD AND PHARMACEUTICALS, WAS TREATED THROUGHOUT HIS STAY AS GOG OFFICIAL GUEST (INCLUDING RETURN FLIGHT TO PARIS IN PRESIDENTIAL GULFSTREAM) AND MET TWICE WITH BONGO. EVENING BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, CONFIDENTIAL

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PRINCE WAS GIVEN NOTE FROM BONGO TO SHAH REQUESTING

BOTH FINANCIAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE, SUBJECTS BONGO PRESUMABLY HOPES DISCUSS FURTHER NEXT MONTH IN TEHRAN.

2. IN ANTICIPATION BOTH OF BONGO TRIP TO TEHRAN AND PRINCE'S VISIT HERE, GOG SUMMONED IRANIAN AMBASSADOR TO NIGERIA SHAHROKH FIROUZ TO LIBREVILLE FOR AVOWED PURPOSE OF PRESENTING CREDENTIALS AS NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADOR TO GABON. FIROUZ FIRST ARRIVED SEPTEMBER 12, BUT LEFT FOUR DAYS LATER WITHOUT EVEN HAVING SEEN FONMIN. ASKED TO RETURN, HE DID SO SEPTEMBER 19 AND SUCCESSFULLY HANDED COPIES OF CREDENTIALS TO FONMIN FOLLOWING DAY. DESPITE LEVER OF PRINCE'S VISIT, HOWEVER, FIROUZ WAS UNABLE SECURE APPOINTMENT TO PRESENT CREDENTIALS TO CHIEF OF STATE AND PRINCE WAS FINALLY TOLD BY BONGO THAT LATTER WISHED TO HAVE RESIDENT IRANIAN AMBASSADOR. THUS, FIROUZ (WHO REFUSED ATTEND BONGO'S DINNER FOR PRINCE BECAUSE OF UNACCREDITED STATUS) RETURNING TO LAGOS SEPTEMBER 26 WITH CREDENTIALS STILL IN HAND AND NO INDICATION THAT HE WILL BE ABLE PRESENT THEM PRIOR TO BONGO'S TRIP TO IRAN.

3. FIROUZ IS VERY UPSET ABOUT TREATMENT ACCORED HIM IN LIBREVILLE, WHICH HE PLANS REPORT FULLY TO TEHRAN AS SOON AS HE RETURNS TO LAGOS. HE HOPES HIS REPORT WILL INDUCE GOI TO DAMPEN RECEPTION PLANNED FOR BONGO IN IRAN, AND VOWS THAT HE WILL NOT COME AGAIN TO LIBREVILLE WITHOUT FIRM APPOINTMENT FOR CREDENTIALS CEREMONY. DESPITE HIS ANGER, HOWEVER, HE IS RECOMMENDING THAT GOI RESPOND FAVORABLY TO BONGO'S REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE (THOUGH NOT FOR FINANCIAL AID), WHICH HE SAID WOULD COVER BOTH MATERIEL AND IRANIAN ADVISEERS.

4. COMMENT: FIROUZ INITIALLY FELL VICTIM TO GABONESE BUREAUCRATIC FUMBLING, WITH FONMIN EVIDENTLY UNINFORMED OF CONVOCAION ARRANGED BY PRESIDENCY, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY RAN MORE SERIOUSLY AFOUL OF BONGO'S GROWING RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADORS. BONGO APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN LITTLE THOUGHT TO IMPACT THIS SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART MIGHT HAVE ON HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP, BUT PRESUMABLY HOPES HOSPITALITY ACCORDED PRINCE GHULAM WILL COMPENSATE FOR COLD SHOULDER TO FIROUZ.
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5. GOG REQUEST FOR IRANIAN MILITARY AID IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF BONGO'S DESIRE TO DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND OF POTENTIAL SUPPORT. FIROUZ GAVE NO DETAILS OF GOG REQUEST (AND REQUEST MAY IN FACT HAVE BEEN VERY BROAD ONE, WITH DETAILS TO BE EXPLORED LATER), BUT DID MENTION THAT GABONESE WITH WHOM HE SPOKE WERE AWARE THAT IRANIAN ARMED FORCES ARE LARGELY U.S. - EQUIPPED.

6. FOR AMBASSADOR HELMS: WHILE FIROUZ IS REPORTING
HIS EXPERIENCES DIRECTLY TO GOI, HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED
THAT YOU BE INFORMED AND THAT WE PASS ON TO YOU HIS HOPE
THAT YOU WILL FIND OCCASION TO MENTION SUBJECT TO SHAH.
FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, WE STRONGLY PREFER KEEP ENTIRELY
OUT OF THIS GOI-GOG TEMPEST, BUT WANTED YOU TO KNOW
BACKGROUND IN EVENT TOPIC IS RAISED WITH YOU FROM IRANIAN
SIDE BECAUSE OF YOUR PAST ACQUAINTANCE WITH FIROUZ.STEIGMAN

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